

AGENDA ITEM

MAY 54-162

National Pro Bono
Celebration Week
Standing Resolution

DATE: April 7, 2010

TO: Members, Board of Governors
Members, Board Committee on Legal Services, Pro Bono and Equal
Access

FROM: Rodney Low, Sharon Ngim, Staff Liaisons, Standing Committee on the
Delivery of Legal Services, Office of Legal Services

SUBJECT: National Pro Bono Celebration Week Standing Resolution

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2009, the American Bar Association designated the week of October 25-31 as the inaugural National Pro Bono Celebration Week. The celebration offered an opportunity to recognize the valuable pro bono contributions made by lawyers throughout the year, and to increase pro bono participation that will help narrow the justice gap. October 24-30, 2010 has been designated as the next National Pro Bono Celebration Week. The Standing Committee on the Delivery of Legal Services and its staff recommends that the Board of Governors adopt a standing resolution that recognizes the National Pro Bono Week Celebration as designated by the American Bar Association each year, commends California attorneys for ongoing pro bono contributions and reminds attorneys about the importance of engaging in and supporting pro bono participation .

BACKGROUND

At their May 2009 meeting, the Board of Governors adopted a resolution recognizing the first National Pro Bono Celebration Week (October 25 – 31, 2009). The celebration provided an opportunity to recognize the valuable pro bono contributions made by lawyers throughout the year, and to increase pro bono participation. Hundreds of events took place at the national, state and local levels to highlight pro bono. The ABA developed a website devoted to the Celebration at www.celebrateprobono.org. The site provides information, resources and support to groups interested in hosting events in their communities.

In California, a steering committee of representatives from the ABA, State Bar of California, local bar associations, legal services providers, law schools and large law firms was formed to help coordinate events in the San Francisco Bay Area during the first National Pro Bono Celebration Week. Various forums, recognition events, outreach activities and programs that highlighted the ongoing need for pro bono participation took place. In San Francisco, the week culminated with a pro bono fair and reception at the Judicial Council Conference Center with Chief Justice Ronald George as the special guest speaker. The steering committee has been reconvened to help coordinate 2010 events in the Bay Area, but this year will coordinate more closely with Southern California and other parts of the state. State Bar staff and members of the Standing Committee on the Delivery of Legal Services (SCDLS) will work with the steering committee to help track National Pro Bono Celebration Week events and activities and share the information statewide.

FISCAL/STAFF IMPACT

None

BOARD BOOK/ADMINISTRATIVE MANUAL IMPACT

None

RECOMMENDATION

The Standing Committee on the Delivery of Legal Services and its staff recommend that the Board of Governors adopt a standing resolution recognizing National Pro Bono Celebration Week as designated by the American Bar Association.

RESOLUTION

PROPOSED BOARD COMMITTEE RESOLUTION

If the Board Committee on Legal Services, Pro Bono and Equal Access agrees with the above recommendation, the following resolution is suggested:

RESOLVED, that the Board Committee on Legal Services, Pro Bono and Equal Access recommends that the Board of Governors adopt the following Resolution:

WHEREAS more than 6 million Californians live below 125% of the federal poverty level and there are approximately 900 legal aid attorneys to serve them; and

WHEREAS the State Bar's Pro Bono Resolution adopted in December 1989 and amended in June 2002 strongly encourages all State Bar members to contribute at least 50 hours of pro bono legal services a

year and to make a financial contribution to non-profit legal services organizations, and

WHEREAS California attorneys donate thousands of hours of pro bono legal services and make annual financial contributions to the Justice Gap Fund and directly to legal services organizations, to help address the huge unmet need for legal assistance to California's poor, especially in light of the current economic situation; and

WHEREAS the State Bar of California actively promotes pro bono participation in a variety of ways on an ongoing basis and gives special recognition annually for outstanding pro bono contributions made by its members; and

WHEREAS the American Bar Association has designated the last week of October in 2009 and 2010 as National Pro Bono Celebration week to recognize the valuable pro bono contributions made by lawyers throughout the year, and to increase pro bono participation across the country to narrow the justice gap;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Governors of the State Bar of California recognizes the last week of October (or another week designated by the American Bar Association), as National Pro Bono Celebration Week, commends California attorneys for their ongoing pro bono contributions, and reminds all members that by engaging in pro bono work and providing financial support they can make a significant difference in the lives of California's poor who would not otherwise have access to the legal system.

PROPOSED BOARD RESOLUTION

If the Board of Governors concurs with the recommendation of the Board Committee on Legal Services, Pro Bono and Equal Access, the following resolution is suggested:

WHEREAS more than 6 million Californians live below 125% of the federal poverty level and there are approximately 900 legal aid attorneys to serve them; and

WHEREAS the State Bar's Pro Bono Resolution adopted in December 1989 and amended in June 2002 strongly encourages all State Bar members to contribute at least 50 hours of pro bono legal services a year and to make a financial contribution to non-profit legal services organizations, and

WHEREAS California attorneys donate thousands of hours of pro bono legal services and make annual financial contributions to the Justice Gap Fund and directly to legal services organizations, to help address the huge unmet need for legal assistance to California's poor, especially in light of the current economic situation; and

WHEREAS the State Bar of California actively promotes pro bono participation in a variety of ways on an ongoing basis and gives special recognition annually for outstanding pro bono contributions made by its members; and

WHEREAS the American Bar Association has designated the last week of October in 2009 and 2010 as National Pro Bono Celebration Week to recognize the valuable pro bono contributions made by lawyers throughout the year, and to increase pro bono participation across the country to narrow the justice gap;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Governors of the State Bar of California recognizes the last week of October (or another week designated by the American Bar Association), as National Pro Bono Celebration week, commends California attorneys for their ongoing pro bono contributions, and reminds all members that by engaging in pro bono work and providing financial support they can make a significant difference in the lives of California's poor who would not otherwise have access to the legal system.